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The Commonweal

November 23, 1951

The Issues in Egypt

M. A. Fitzsimons

Dirt on the Waterfront

John C. Cort

French School Crisis

Robert Barrat

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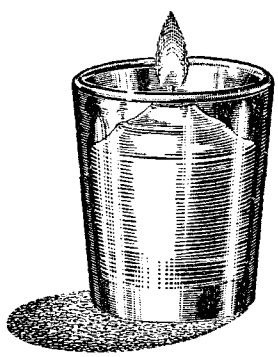

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Economic Shadows

INFLATION appears to be the chief villain in the signals of distress the United States is now receiving from Britain and France. Both countries are in monetary difficulties, fearful for the stability of their currencies, dangerously low in gold reserves. British stocks of foodstuffs are lower than they have been for a decade; only three-fifths of that nation's food needs can be supplied by home production. The pace of rearmament and the cost of defenses in Malaya and the Middle East are aggravating circumstances which, coupled with the loss of the Abadan refinery, make a tight economic situation that much more desperate.

France, on the other hand, boasts an economy which has a better balance between industry and food production. However, the franc is considerably weaker than the pound; gold reserves are already well below the danger point. There is, besides, the frightful drain of a billion dollars a year from the war in Indo-China. French rearmament expenditures comprise an arduous burden. All this contributes to making the Pleven government extremely shaky. Much of the new British slash of imports and the cut in foreign travel allowances will fall on France.

But in both countries difficulties have been greatly increased by the rise in cost of strategic raw materials on which their respective industries are heavily dependent. The United States is primarily responsible for this, since we have been rearming and stockpiling on a major scale. With us price is no object when the chips are down. And so we have driven up prices to such a degree that it has upset all preliminary estimates in France and Britain.

It would not seem that the bolstering of the economies of these two chief allies could be subject to debate. The North Atlantic defense strategy is at stake.

Moreover Britain has increased her output 50 percent and her exports 75 percent above the pre-war level. Her rearming is going ahead at an impressive pace. The slash in imports which the Conservatives had to decree as virtually their first act of office will make a sparse national diet even sparser—with the meat ration cut to one shilling five pence worth per week. With winter coming on the meager coal ration will be brought still lower.

It is long since a billion dollars this way or that has had an appreciable effect on the American economy. Yet for either France or Britain such a sum would have momentous immediate consequences. A new round of American aid could take several forms: extension of new credits, shipments of foodstuffs and all sorts of needed materials for industry and armament, the placing of orders for military supplies in France and Britain—orders on which our two allies could obtain loans. Our aid must be forthcoming in whatever form.

DEFENSE of the West appears to be an unending, nerve-wracking task. The Soviet Union appears as belligerent as ever; the Korean War drags on; Asia continues in resentful revolt; and the European economies stand in continual need of stimulants. Would that it were otherwise. It is, however, a prospect we must face as long as Soviet Russia wants the cold war to be continued.

Meanwhile here in America things are not so bad for most people. Prosperity is general. The dollar is steadily losing in value. Taxes are shooting up. There are some mild shortages on non-essentials. Some of our young men are being called up, and seventeen months of the Korean War have brought a hundred thousand casualties. The main thing we must do is hang on for another year and keep at the rebuilding of the defenses of Western Europe. At this juncture special aid to France and Britain is for us a minor step about which we have little choice.

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A Matter of Press Relations?

IT IS impossible for the Pope to address a group of pilgrims on a subject of special interest to them and their country without making news. Pius XII has in many instances taken the occasion to state principles of a general import.

For the American newspapers these remarks are news as soon as they are uttered. Their correspondents at the Vatican feel under compulsion to get off their stories as quickly as they can. If an official text is not available, an unofficial one has to do. If a text is in Latin or in Italian—or some other foreign tongue—a translation or a summary in English must be attempted before the news story grows cold. Under the pressures of his calling, the American correspondent often finds the Vatican unconscionably slow in providing official English texts.

It is hardly surprising when such news stories reach the American front page in a somewhat garbled form. Summaries are by definition telescoped, often resulting in wrong emphasis or distortion. Few journalists are competent theologians. Translations of key phrases are unhappily often inaccurate. Even the official texts that find their way into the diocesan papers are susceptible of later emendations. The sad thing is that it is the first uncorrected summary or text of a story that makes the impact on the American reader; he seldom hears of, or is affected by, later modifications. He is, therefore, often egregiously misled.

Nowhere is the unsatisfactory nature of this process better illustrated than in the reporting of Pope Pius' discourse to the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives, October 29. According to the New York papers, and the even later summary in *Time* magazine, one would think that Catholic husbands and wives were suddenly confronted with this lone alternative: either to bring into the world as many children as it was physically possible for them or to refrain from marital intercourse altogether.

For some, the fact that the full text in the diocesan papers warranted no such conclusion (even this text was subjected to certain later revisions) was no help at all. Many Catholics do not read their diocesan papers. Moreover, the impression is now abroad that the above-mentioned choice comprises the Catholic doctrine in this important matter, although the actual text refers to "serious motives . . . medical, eugenic, economic and social" for refraining from intercourse during certain periods.

Newsgatherers at the Vatican experience all sorts of difficulties. The Italian newspapers have the reputation of being no respecters of release dates—so that texts cannot be given in advance. Even official translations leave much to be desired. Under the circumstances there is only one possibility open to the American newspaper reader: to take all unconfirmed texts and summaries with a large measure of salt.

• NEXT WEEK •

H. A. REINHOLD writes a personal reminiscence of Don Luigi Sturzo, founder of the Christian Democrat movement, in honor of his 80th birthday.

Here is the way Father Reinhold describes their first meeting: "My first impression was: Benedict XV risen again—the same noble head, the aquiline nose, the wide and tired eyes, the grace of the greeting and the beautiful rich voice. His desk, surrounded by manuscripts, was a little sewing table. His bed, a sort of cot, was behind a small screen. It was a pathetic sight, humanly speaking, for a meeting with history."

Labor's Point Four

AS COLONIAL and other undeveloped countries begin to emerge from their economic as well as their political tutelage, they will be setting up their own industries of various sorts. There will be new groups of workers; relationships with management will have to be set up. A whole series of new unions will spring up in many lands.

At the moment, under the auspices of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the CIO, the AFL and the British Trades Union Congress are serving as the principal contributors to a fund designed to foster the establishment of unions under democratic auspices. India and Pakistan, Syria and Lebanon, Egypt, Greece are among the chief intended recipients.

One of the most important aspects of the plan is that the establishment of strong labor unions in those countries will make certain that a larger portion of the sums extended in the form of American economic assistance will find its way into the hands of the workers themselves and thus raise domestic purchasing power. It will thus be in harmony with the current American

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plan to link up further economic assistance to Europe with higher productivity and higher wages per worker.

Another interesting feature is that a large portion of these sums, which are to be contributed from eighty countries, will be allocated for labor colleges. For countries with little labor union experience will be in acute need of trained labor leaders. The establishment of new industries in lands hitherto simply producers of new materials will require human as well as technical engineering. This program is the latest indication of the increasingly important role, national and international, of the American labor leader.

Challenge

IN PARIS, when Andrei Vishinsky took the Western disarmament proposal as a laughing matter, the rest of the world, for the most part, could not have been said to have laughed with him, because in a very painful way Mr. Vishinsky's laugh was at our expense. It is already costing us so much to rearm Europe that the American, British and French economies are creaking under the strain. The Russian's laughter was taken as a sign that we will have to pour considerably more money and men into Europe before the Continent arrives at a situation of strength sufficient to restrain the jovial side of Mr. Vishinsky's nature.

As we go about the job of rearming Europe, it is a troublesome fact that at the moment the revolutionary situation in the world's so-called underdeveloped areas is drawing off a good part of the manpower and money that should be going to Europe. This applies to American, British and French contributions. We are heavily involved in Korea; the British are fighting in Korea and Malaya and they have just dispatched to the Suez Canal a division that was supposed to go to General Eisenhower; the French are forced to send their cadres and troops to Indo-China and this has held up the urgent job of training French manpower for the European army.

There can be no question of our giving up the fight in Korea, Malaya, Indo-China or Egypt in order to speed the rearmament of Europe. There may be an argument about the priority of giving aid to Europe or to Asia, but there can no longer be any doubt that the fight for life is global.

It is our opinion that the Administration has been correct in giving priority to Europe in its foreign policy, because in the immediate years ahead, the fate of Europe's moral, technical and commercial resources will be the decisive factor in the balance of power between East and West.

But in the last two or three years we have all become so aware of the close interdependence of Europe, America and Asia that as the days go on, it gets harder and harder to think of the continents as isolated areas. We know now that it is a very touchy thing to try to fight a war in Korea and keep it confined to that country, and we know that an argument over an oil refinery in a place called Abadan can make the headlines in any paper in Europe or America.

In short, the majority of men, living, by Western standards, in appalling poverty and exploitation, can no longer be treated as if they didn't count.

It seems to us that what we need now most of all is the ability to look at Asia with an open mind and to try to see what life is really like there. As matters stand, we tend to see Asia in our own image: we expect the Asiatics to be up in arms against Communism and if they are not, we look on them as traitors, whereas they may in fact be simply too weak to be up in arms. We forget that the vast majority of Asiatics are illiterate and have only a vague idea, if any, of what Marxism is all about. Above all, we forget that millions upon millions of them are starving for food.

We are a nation with a surplus of food. And yet we recently haggled with Mr. Nehru about sharing that surplus with the Indians. We are also a nation desperately in need of friends in the underdeveloped areas. These circumstances may not be unrelated.

The underdeveloped areas present a truly staggering challenge to us, but it is something that we cannot put off. So far, we have barely begun to understand what must be done.

The sixth weekly tally on "Operation Survival" shows that 1,945 new long-term subscriptions have come in since the drive opened. That means 2,555 are needed to reach the goal by the first of the year. During the past week a campus drive conducted by a group of Notre Dame students got under way, while *The Aquin,* the students' weekly at St. Thomas College, St. Paul, Minn., urged its readers to join in the campaign by subscribing to THE COMMONWEAL at the college bookstore.

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The New Inquisition

THIS page of two weeks ago ("Call It The Thing" Nov. 9 issue) was reprinted in the New York *Herald Tribune,* and a man who saw it there sent me a letter. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that you do not fully understand the cause for the worsening of non-Catholic-Catholic relations. It is not the *religious* aspects of Catholicism of which we non-Catholics are critical—it is the political policy. It seems to me very important that you and all Catholics should understand this distinction."

If the man meant that he is critical of the political activities of certain famous Catholics in this country, then I am with him, and so are a lot of others. If, for instance, he means that he is critical of the history of James Michael Curley in Boston, of Edward J. Kelly in Chicago, of Frank Hague in Jersey City, of Thomas J. Pendergast in Kansas City and of other politicians like them, then he can count me on his side. If he means that he is critical of certain Big Catholic Laymen like the Mr. Big whom John Cort names in his column this week, then he will get no argument from me. If he means that he is no admirer of Senator Joe McCarthy or of the Franco lobby, again I am in his corner.

But I think what the *Herald Tribune* reader has in mind is more serious and fundamental. He objects to Catholicism primarily, I suspect, because it is not secularist; that is, he objects to the Church's enunciating moral principles which have an immediate practical effect on the social and political life of this country.

For instance, the Church teaches that religious training is the heart of education—an idea dear to our American forefathers, incidentally—and that principle has been concretized in Catholic universities, colleges, high schools and thousands of grade schools throughout the country. The man who wrote the letter may disapprove of this separate school system. But to do so, he has to challenge the principle about religion in education. The schools are a social fact; the principle which gave them life is a religious one. How can he talk about one without considering the other? He may think that all he objects to is the separate school system, but fundamentally he doesn't accept the dictum that religious education is all-important, and that is the heart of the matter.

Take the question of medical ethics. The Church teaches that even in medical practice some things are wrong and others right. It has made solemn moral pronouncements on such things as abortion, infanticide, sterilization, etc. Just recently the Pope repeated again that it is morally wrong directly to take the life of an innocent person, and he further said that by a person was meant any human being in even the earliest stages of development. To directly kill a baby, for whatever purpose, said the Pope, is murder.

The man who wrote the letter may not like that idea or agree with it. He may say it is all right to kill a baby if by doing so you save the life of the child's mother. So he may criticize the Catholic hospital which will not allow murder (according to its own principles) to be committed under its auspices. But to do so, again he has to make a religious and moral judgment. He has to say that such a killing is not wrong or that a child *in utero* is not a person because the body has not yet been infused with a soul, or that the right to life is not inherent but comes from some source other than God—society, perhaps, or the law or social usefulness or something like that. But whatever his reason, the man must make a moral or religious (or anti-religious) judgment of his own.

These are just two random examples of how it is impossible to discuss certain questions without moving into the religious field. Religious beliefs and principles, especially those founded on the Natural Law, do not exist in a vacuum. They enter into the warp and woof of life. It is impossible to avoid them. These principles come from somewhere. For the Catholic they are derived from a coherent system of thought founded on the Natural Law and the teachings of Christ as enunciated by the Church which, Catholics believe, He founded.

Because Americans take opposing views of the source of morality, they are going to disagree about artificial birth prevention. But the man who says it is wrong and votes against proposed legislation because he believes it is wrong is not the only one making a moral judgment. The man who disagrees is by his vote saying that the first one's moral principle is false. The same would be true of euthanasia.

Is the one man less 'patriotic' than the other? It may be they disagree about the nature of morality or the binding force of the Natural Law, or even that there is such a thing as Natural Law. But if they do, their disagreement is fundamentally religious, not political. And it is nonsense to pretend otherwise.

The point is, the two men have to live side by side in the same free nation. Each of them has citizenship on the terms of what he is—a believer, a non-believer, an atheist, a Catholic—and he is not expected to assume the other's moral principles or religious beliefs in order to keep it. This country is not dedicated to "safeguarding the principles of the Reformation" (Dr. Robert A. McCracken of New York) or of enthroning any special set of religious dogmas but of providing a place where men can serve the truth they have accepted and the religious beliefs they have espoused without fear or favor—and without danger of being branded as 'unpatriotic' or politically suspect because theirs is not the majority religious opinion.

It makes things more difficult, granted; it calls for long patience and a good measure of personal tolerance, true. But it seems to me it is worth all that. And the first sign that it is no longer working is when there is a hue and cry against this or that religious belief, not because it is theologically unacceptable but because it is 'unpatriotic' or 'undemocratic' or 'un-American.' The heresy-hunter is easier to deal with when he says frankly that it is heresy he is after. When he calls it 'subversion' no one is safe.

JOHN COGLEY.

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The Issues in Egypt

The sins of imperialist fathers are being visited on the sons of a new Britain.

By M. A. FITZSIMONS

THE BRITISH dispute with Egypt is a tangled web of old "wrongs" and hatreds, present weaknesses and future fears. It is a story of Empire, of imperialism, and in Egypt, the majestic adventure of imperialism culminates now in frustration. It is a bitter frustration, because, as Virgil tells us, to build an Empire takes great labor.

The greatest sin of imperialism is that its victims often become irresponsible. In the case of Egypt, national memories and resentment loom so large now that it is difficult for the Egyptians to see the present moment objectively; recollection breeds anger. The present and the future are the captives of the past.

The ancient wrong is the British occupation of Egypt dating from 1882 in the salad days of European imperialism. The magnitude of this imagined wrong is brought home to us when we reflect that Egypt had not been independent for two thousand years. To make matters worse, three circumstances surrounding the occupation bedevilled the affair. In the first place, British intervention ultimately destroyed an early Egyptian nationalist reform movement. Secondly, since the occupation was originally urged but then opposed by France, the English denied to the French any policy-making participation and so the French promptly added Egypt to their litany of charges against perfidious Albion and favored some of the later developments of Egyptian nationalism. Finally, the occupation took place under the Little Englander, Gladstone, and he refused to consider the actual annexation of Egypt. The British position was therefore not defined in terms of international law. The British simply stayed on for the duration of the emergency—in Egyptian eyes, a long dalliance.

During the First World War, when Britain was at war with the Ottoman Empire, she proclaimed herself suzerain over the Protectorate of Egypt. At the same time Britain sponsored the Arab revolt against the Turks. Egyptian nationalism flourished and the Egyptians looked forward to finding a place in the Wilsonian program of national self-determination. The one Egyptian mass political party, the Wafd (the Egyptian Delegation), was organized in 1918 to present the case for Egyptian independence to the Paris Peace Conference. But the Wafd was not recognized and, for the moment, its leaders were imprisoned. Britain, however, was prepared to recognize the independence of Egypt if British strategic interests in the area could be protected. This problem of transforming British privileges that had been secured by British domination in Egypt into British privileges voluntarily granted by Egypt, the "injured equal," is still the heart of the matter.

The primary British demand is for the right to maintain forces on Egyptian soil for the purpose of defending the Suez Canal. To the Egyptians, this present demand involves a change of words but not of substance. They have argued and argued that a treaty between equals cannot be negotiated by an occupied country. On this subject their maximum and minimum demands are the same: the withdrawal of British troops. In 1922 Britain wearily and unilaterally proclaimed the independence of Egypt, reserving, among other matters, control over Egyptian defense and foreign policies. Attempts to regularize the anomalous British position by treaty were unsuccessful until 1936, when the Egyptians yielded to fear.

The Italian attack on Ethiopia caused the Egyptians to agree to a treaty (1936) which permitted the British to maintain 10,000 troops in the Canal Zone. Egypt and Britain were to be allies in war. In return, the occupation of Egypt was ended. The treaty, to last twenty years, might be revised by mutual agreement after ten years, if the Egyptian Army was then capable of defending the Canal Zone. Since then the Egyptians have argued that their adhesion to the treaty was not a free act. The United Nations in 1947 did not accept the Egyptian arguments.

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THIS attempt to have the Treaty invalidated came about after Egypt had experienced another humiliation and a great widening of horizons. The humiliation occurred in 1942

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when the Egyptian Government's loyalty to the hard-pressed British was questionable. The British Ambassador ordered a display of force at Abdin Palace and King Farouk was compelled to put the Wafd Party and its present leader, Nahas Pasha, in control of the government. Farouk dismissed them in 1944 when their usefulness to the British and the Allies was ended. The corruptibility of the Wafd and its administrative weakness had bloomed intolerably during the war.

Meanwhile, Islamic but non-Arabic Cairo became in the war years a kind of second and unofficial capital of the British Commonwealth and the center of the Arab world. With British blessings the Arab League was organized to gather together the dispersed energies of the Arab states. This was a brave attempt on Britain's part to ride and control a xenophobic and anti-colonial whirlwind. British support of the Arab League involved the unlamented ejection of France from Syria and the Lebanon. Thereafter, the British found themselves unable to direct Arab nationalism to more constructive ends. The economic weakness of Britain partly explains this failure. But American support for the Zionist cause and the emergence of the state of Israel brought Arab nationalism to a point of consuming heat. In Arab eyes, Britain had been weak where Israel was concerned and Britain had failed them. Their own spectacular military defeat in the war with Israel compounded the tragedy. But the Arabs have not risen to the tragic level of their fortunes. The rhetoric behind their talk of unity sounds hollow next to the substance of their mutual recriminations. Refusing to recognize the reality of defeat, they have turned in their frustration on the ancient wrong-doer and the venerable scapegoat, Britain. For Egypt, the horizon has indeed widened, but into frustration.

The nationalist program of Egypt involves more than the evacuation of British troops. It also calls for effective Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan, a large area to the south.

On the Sudan issue the interplay of interests reaches total stalemate. As the British lose influence in Egypt, the Sudan base becomes all the more necessary. Here the British have been efficient colonial administrators and they can and do point now to the treaty of 1936 which emphasizes that the Sudanese must be consulted about the final settlement of their future status. So in this case, the imperialist onus is, thus, on the Egyptians, who would control the Sudan. On the whole, the Egyptians fear an eventually independent Sudan. They hope to dominate it, or, failing that, they would prefer to have the British act as honest brokers in the disposition of Nile water, so essential to the whole area.

IN 1946 the Labor Government attempted to meet the Egyptian national case on evacuation and the Sudan. But the negotiations foundered. The British then agreed to evacuate Egypt and, simultaneously, to get together with Egypt on defense matters. The joker in Egyptian eyes was that the British retained their treaty rights, pending satisfactory arrangements. This conceding and not conceding—"tantalizing diplomacy," as Churchill called it—was a gesture vainly designed to salve Egyptian pride.

A similarly odd agreement was reached on the Sudan issue. Egyptian sovereignty over the latter was recognized without prejudice to the right of the Sudanese to determine their future plans. When the Egyptian Prime Minister publicly rejoiced about Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan, the British sternly called his attention to the limits on it. Everything then went up in the heat of Egyptian riots and charges of national treachery. This overly-glib, tantalizing diplomacy left behind it only confusion and mistrust. The experience reveals that agreement is all but impossible to reach.

Thus, in an area vital for communications with Asia, and for the defense of the Mediterranean and of Near East oil resources, the nationalist grievance cannot be removed. The "wrong" is small enough (unless the national state be made an absolute end in international politics). Why, then, can it not be either atoned for or forgotten? This brings up the tale of present weakness, both British and Egyptian.

★

WHEN THE British first taught the arts of administration to the Egyptians, they lightened the burden of enforced labor and taxes on the Egyptian peasantry. But Liberal Britain was not really concerned with the wholesale social transformation of the country. In fact, she worked with the landlord class, the pashas. During this time city and university life produced a professional and middle class with the usual abundance of intellectual publicists. From this group came the nationalist agitators. The population of Egypt, living on the crowded Nile fringe, multiplied, increasing the size of the army of nationalist agitators, which was composed of passive peasants and the mobs of Cairo and Alexandria.

This Egyptian state breeds its own weakness. Unevenly distributed wealth does not produce greater wealth but only a large population weak from disease and malnutrition. The pashas have no social sense and the nationalists themselves are inclined to confuse the hard job of social change with the rather noisy achievement of the nationalist program against Britain. The nationalist sentiment is genuine enough, though, and

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it grows more heated as conditions grow worse. There is no apparent way of escaping this domestic frustration, which breeds discouragement and irresponsibility and this, in turn, carries over to the international scene, and affects the whole North Atlantic community. Basically, Egyptian nationalism, like Ireland's, is now neutralist. This nationalism, learned from Europe, is anti-imperialist and therefore anti-Western, and has been reenforced recently by an emphasis on Islam and Arabism.

The Egyptians themselves know that they have little to fear from Britain and much from Russia. Egyptian diplomats and army men have often said as much. The nationalist grievance, however, takes precedence.

★

BRITISH and Egyptian weaknesses portend a troubled future for this area. Soviet receivership of internally disintegrating Arab states is possible, though not probable in the near future.

The formulation of an American policy for the area must start with three disadvantages; the first is our share in the creation of Israel; the second is that we must support our British ally; the third is that the only fair and obvious solution—Egyptian adhesion to a Middle East Pact—has been offered and rejected. If such an offer could have been made early in 1950 it might have been accepted. In the middle of a nationalist campaign the offer was certain to be rejected and now the spurned suitor has been somewhat cheapened.

The prospect, then, is that the British will stand on their treaty rights and we shall support them. The Egyptians have gone as far as they dare. They cannot and will not use force deliberately, though harrying tactics may get out of hand. They will flirt with Russia and rant against the British, even though many of those doing the flirting and ranting will be happy that the British will be there for five years more (against Israel and Russia). If quieter times come, it may be possible to reach a face-saving arrangement on training and supplying the Egyptian Army. We should maintain vigilant watch for opportunities to aid Egypt constructively.

The interests of the Atlantic Community and the Mediterranean world require the maintenance of defense positions in the Middle East. The record of the last quarter century indicates that Egypt cannot drive a bargain on its nationalist program. Thus, the Atlantic Community must support the remnants of imperialism in the British treaty claim. We shall, at best, be in the somewhat pompous position of lecturing the Egyptians on the futility of extreme nationalism in an interdependent world. But in this iron age we shall often have a bitter taste in our mouths.

FROM FRANCE

Crisis Over the School Question

OUR young Fourth Republic is having a tough time with a problem which for several months held up the formation of the Pleven government and almost led to its overthrow in September. This is the school problem and it is still with us in another form: the strike of the examination correctors has just now further embittered our public ife.

It is essential to distinguish clearly between two aspects of the question. The first is the problem of the free school (one not operated by the State)—an ancient quarrel in modern French history which has suddenly flared up like a fire slumbering beneath the embers. That is the one which is politically more important, and I shall deal with it in this article. The second is much more serious for the future of France and for her youth: the reform of our teaching. But it would require volumes to deal with that.

★

LET me begin with that delicate problem of free, or confessional, schools to which I drew the attention of my COMMONWEAL readers almost a year ago.

A brief survey of the past will help. The school question goes rather far back. The Falloux law of 1850, establishing freedom of instruction, and in fact favoring religious teaching, provoked numerous protests throughout the country at the time. During the entire existence of the Third Republic the lively opposition of Catholics to the rather anti-clerical new regime made the Christian school a center of anti-Republican sentiment. The result was a series of restrictive measures passed from 1880 to 1904, which culminated in the suppression of all teaching orders (Jesuits and Christian Brothers particularly).

When Catholics and unbelievers became brothers in arms and shed their blood together in the First World War, these passions subsided. The teaching orders were again permitted to function. But by this time Catholics were impoverished and less able to support them, and the countryside became progressively de-Christianized. Then came World War II. The private school system which had developed considerably since the beginning of the century willingly accepted appropriations from the Vichy Government.

When Liberation came, the problem was again posed in an acute form. It was soon apparent that the free schools could not support themselves from their own resources. A majority voted the celebrated Poinso-Chapuis decrees, which authorize the local governments (general councils, municipal councils) that desire it, to vote appro-

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priations for private schools (which for the most part are Catholic).

But that appropriation is not enough. For there are regions where the local governments are extremely poor. In addition many parents find it extremely unjust to have to pay national taxes, which enable the State to support the public schools, as well as local taxes for the support of the free school in their locality. The injustice is flagrant when the public school has one to three pupils for every hundred in the private schools—as is the case in certain *départements* in the East. Hence the violent campaign launched two years ago by the Association of Parents of Pupils in Free Schools, particularly in Brittany and Vendée where the proportion of Catholics is high and where there is a strong royalist sentiment. This led in certain places to the refusal to pay taxes.

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LET me give some figures which indicate the importance and urgency of the problem. In the past school year French elementary public schools had 4,310,000 children and 157,000 teachers, private or free schools 1,000,000 children and 34,487 teachers. In secondary schools the respective figures for pupils were 420,000 and 320,000. For higher education it was 128,000 and 21,000, for technical education 209,000 and 326,000. The free schools, colleges and universities account for one-third of all French students. Above the elementary level they account for 45 percent.

The financial burden which the free schools impose on Catholics is about thirty million francs a year, a heavy burden considering the general impoverishment of French Catholics. Because of their poverty, private schools pay starvation wages to their teachers, from 7,000 to 20,000 francs a month (from $20 to $57.20).

Moreover, the free schools perform a genuine public service in France at this moment. The State is absolutely powerless to provide instruction for all children of school age; in appropriations for education, France ranks twenty-fifth among the nations of the world. And there is little likelihood that the situation will improve in the years to come. Our participation in the rearming of the West and the war in Indo-China will prevent us from increasing the sums appropriated for education.

In addition to this there will be a staggering increase in the number of students in the next few years. That is because of the birth rate since the Liberation and the increasing numbers in all social classes who go to school. In the decade which began in 1948 the number of pupils from six to thirteen years of age is to increase by 1,400,000 and will require 50,000 new classrooms. Finally, most parents want their children to remain in school until they are seventeen and many wish them to undertake higher studies.

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THAT, then, is an outline of the school problem confronting our nation and it indicates how urgent reforms of the present programs are—reforms which our political leaders have every reason to consider. But the problem of subventions to the schools has a political and even an electoral impact which is much more immediate.

It was indeed the focus of the elections held in May. The MRP, anxious not to be propelled by the Left toward the parties of the traditional Right, had done everything possible for several years to prevent an open debate on the question. The Gaullists, however, eagerly seized the occasion. They sought a twofold advantage in this operation: to snatch its Catholic following from the MRP by hammering on a problem which weighed heavily on the consciences of the faithful; to force the MRP to break openly with the Socialists by reviving the old debate on laicization.

The League for Freedom of Teaching, which includes many members of the Association of Parents of Pupils in the Free Schools, vigorously urged its members to demand of their candidates that they take a clear position on the matter of appropriations for the free schools. For the Catholic public in a number of *départements* a candidate's promise to support such appropriations thus became the real basis for giving him their votes. As soon as the elections were over, the same league organized a parliamentary association to defend freedom of teaching. But in its cavalier fashion the Gaullists alone, seeking to drive a wedge between the Socialists and Radicals on the one hand and the MRP on the other, proposed a law which would give scholarship funds to all parents with children in school, public or private. This satisfied neither the parents with children in free chools nor the MRP. For this proposal would aid both people who needed it and people who did not. For, as in America, families send their children to the public schools free of charge.

The device finally adopted, after several days of prolonged discussion and by a vote of 313 to 255, was roughly as follows. A special fund of the Treasury, financed by raising the tax on production, is to place at the disposal of every head of a family with children in elementary school an allotment of 1,000 francs per child for each three months of the school year. This 3,000 francs is to be distributed to the Association of Parents of Pupils in Free Schools from the *département* education funds for public instruction.

The sum provided in this indirect fashion for elementary private education was three billion francs. It allowed the free schools to surmount a difficult situation and open their doors in October; but it was not to determine in advance the solutions to be found in the future. In fact, the problem as a whole remains. For the years ahead the difficulties of the free schools will but increase. Furthermore, this solution had threatened the Third Force majority, placing in jeopardy the fragile political balance we had reached at the end of the last legislative session.

The debate between the laicizers and clericals has indeed reopened, and it is probable that it will stir up public disputes to the point that no one will be able to find a solution which will take into account the pride and interests of these two camps—not to mention the interests of the nation.

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IT IS consoling to realize that the school dispute had no truly popular repercussions. Except for certain regions where the problem is particularly acute there is no danger of a local battle between the teachers of the free and public schools. On the contrary, a sort of feeling of solidarity in poverty is developing in both camps.

I do not mean to say that there is really no problem or that the French people have no interest in it. But this affair is unable to arouse in the French people the profound emotions that it did in the past century or in 1908. The Socialist leaders who brandished the specter of clericalism in the recent debates gave the impression of being behind the times if not somewhat ridiculous.

I must also deal with the misunderstanding that exists between the defenders of laicism and the clericals. The first believe, or claim to believe, that the second want to attack the principle of laicism, that is to say, religious neutrality, which is the very foundation of our Republic. Such is not the case, at least for the majority of Catholics. Of course, there are believers who entertain a nostalgia for the feudal system, for the union of the throne and the altar. But the Catholic intelligentsia has in fact met the present situation by rallying sincerely and once and for all to the republican and democratic system. It has no desire for the restoration of a clerical State.

These people know how costly it has been for the Church to link herself too closely with certain political regimes. They seek simply the carrying out of the basic principle inscribed in the Constitution of providing that every citizen may give his children the education that he chooses. It is no longer the wealthy bourgeoisie that sends its sons to the Christian schools but families in extremely modest circumstances. "In fact," say the clericals to the laicizers, "you refuse to be content with the general principle of laicism in the Republic. What you want is a monopoly and a general laicization of teaching."

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I BELIEVE that the most sincere defenders of secular teaching do indeed most honestly desire that all French children get the same neutral teaching, deconfessionalized, freed of passion. But it can be well pointed out that, while it is possible to teach mathematics in a neutral fashion, it is a different matter with the great problems of history and philosophy. To teach is also to educate; it is to prepare a pupil for life. As some well-known person has said, "Life is not neutral."

The defenders of freedom of instruction therefore basically have reason on their side. And one has only to consider the solutions adopted in such democratic countries of the West as Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and the United States, to find the outlook of the French laicists strangely totalitarian in comparison. Nevertheless, as I have already said in THE COMMONWEAL, it is not clear how important it is for the French Catholics to save their schools even if on the level of principle they are right.

It suffices to calculate the money, the number of men and the time devoted to the defense and to the operation of private teaching. All the living forces of French Catholicism are practically mobilized in defense of the school. And this at a moment when France is regarded as a mission country where catechising, worker and rural missions and the Catholic Action movement would claim a major part of our Catholic energies.

It has been asserted that the free schools serve as a source of vocations for the clergy, that 90 per cent of our seminarians and 95 per cent of our novices come from the free schools. That is a weighty argument. But it might be asked whether the social and family milieu of those children who attend the free schools do not have as much to do with awakening young people to their vocations as the schools themselves. It is probable that if the Church could devote more time and more personnel to the milieux which she once abandoned, she would experience an increase in vocations which would more than make up for the number lost because of the disappearance of the free schools.

★

THE SOLUTION which has been provisionally adopted does not seem to be workable. At present, with its unbalanced budget and financial difficulties, the State is not in a position materially to increase the sum of its appropriations for private schools. If it were to attempt to do so, moreover, the political repercussions would be considerable. But maintaining the status quo would mean that the free school will cease to exist.

One highly interesting solution has been proposed by the political secretariat of the Count de Paris, the French Pretender, which brings out each month excellent bulletins in which the national interest always triumphs over partisan passions. It would consist in creating a national, semi-autonomous university. This University, integrating the core of the schools and institutions now existing, would be self-administering. The State would control the programs and studies; the representatives of the families would serve as consultative councils.

"The big advantage of such a solution would be to administer this public service, which instruction is, in such a way that the schools are not prey to politics, changes of government or ideologies. This system could be much more decentralized than teaching controlled by the State and able to adopt more flexible solutions which would take into account the different matters that surround the dispute in various regions of the country. . . ." But the editors of the bulletin do not dodge the fact that "the real difficulty in so revolutionary an experiment in a country as centralized and statist as France, would be to set up a public service of this importance in a form that is relatively autonomous." The danger is that for the moment the sectarian and combative spirit which exists in the general staffs of our political parties will prevent the adoption of any reasonable solution, one requiring moderation and a certain spirit of sacrifice all round.

ROBERT BARRAT

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Dirt on the Waterfront

I HAD to laugh the other day. I read a piece by Murray Kempton, the bright young labor columnist of the New York *Post,* that brought back old times. He was describing an interview he had with Joe Ryan, president-for-life of the International Longshoremen's Association, AFL. I quote:

"Ryan and this reporter met in the lobby of the Port Authority Building. . . . I gave him my name.

" 'Who?' he spat. 'From the *Post?* Get out of here.' "

After a few brief insults, Ryan concluded, "You know what you are. You're a lousy punk." Before Kempton, stunned, could find his tongue Ryan had gone.

In 1936 I covered a meeting of the New York Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL, for the *Catholic Worker.* Joe Ryan was president of this body at that time and chairman of the meeting. Most of the meeting was concerned with Joe's efforts to break the strike of the rank-and-file seamen against the corrupt leadership of "Emperor" Grange and the old International Seamen's Union, AFL. It was out of this strike that there emerged the National Maritime Union, CIO. The *Catholic Worker* was backing the strike and had set up a soup kitchen to feed the men.

The meeting almost ended in a riot, with Ryan openly urging his followers to beat up the delegates who favored the striking seamen. Horrified, I approached Ryan as he came down the platform, the intention in my naive little head to appeal to him as a Catholic to call off his muscle men. Like Kempton all I was able to do was identify myself.

"From the *Catholic Worker?* You go back and tell Dorothy Day that she's no lady." And in a tone that managed to be both contemptuous and sinister he added, "Get away from me, get away from me." I, too, was stunned into silence.

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THAT'S Ryan, all right. Quick with the insults and the righteous indignation, he usually manages, like Potter's lifeman, to keep one up. As Gene Sampson, leader of the striking longshoremen in the current replay of an old story, told me once, "Don't sell Ryan short. He's a cutie."

Sampson should know. This is about the third or fourth outlaw strike in the past ten years that Sampson, leader of Ryan's home local, 791, has helped to head up in opposition to, and as protest against, Ryan's leadership. And yet Ryan always lands on his feet. At the ILA convention a few months back there wasn't even an opposition ticket. I asked an old friend, an expert on the waterfront and a former member of the ILA himself, what the explanation was. "Too many hoods," he said.

I remember an incident several years after the Central Trades affair. I was with the *Labor Leader* then and called Ryan on the phone for a statement on something. "The *Labor Leader,* huh?" he said. "Me, I lead 50,000 longshoremen. What labor do you lead?" At that time the *Labor Leader* was a struggling little paper with a few thousand circulation. Frankly, the question stopped me.

But now more substantial people are beginning to ask Ryan why it is that, in fact, he does not lead 50,000 longshoremen. And they are not taking any glib counter-questions for answers. There is Senator Kefauver for one. There is Spruille Braden, former ambassador to Argentina and currently president of the N. Y. City Anti-Crime Committee, who in a telegram urging the intervention of Governor Dewey charged that "mobsters dominate the majority of locals" in New York.

Braden even named some of the gangsters who are on the ILA payroll: Harold Bowers of the West Side local 828, "the pistol local," where a young man named Collentine was shot down on the street several years ago, a murder described at length in these pages; Anthony Anastasia of the Murder, Inc. Anastasias, the terror of the Brooklyn waterfront; Mike Clementi of the East Side, a lieutenant of the notorious Socks Lanza; Ed Florio, a power on the Jersey docks; and Alex DiBrizzi, a big cheese in Staten Island.

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THERE is another voice asking questions and giving answers, that of Father John Corridan, S.J., associate director of Xavier Labor School on the West Side and a veteran student of the New York waterfront. Father Corridan on Oct. 29 defended the strikers from the charge of Communism that has been raised by Ryan and by some people who should know better, such as Victor Riesel, the labor columnist. The ACTU has also denied this charge.

"The Communist issue does not enter into this situation," Father Corridan said. "It is just a Ryan club. There is genuine disagreement with the Ryan leadership. The men are disgruntled with the rackets going on."

He then named the same five mob leaders mentioned by Braden, and added, "If you notice, the locals which are trying to keep the men at work are the locals headed by the men named above. The locals that went out on strike are those which have exercised some degree of democracy and freedom.

"You can't think of Ryan so much as a labor figure as a political one. He rules over a group of warlords, local leaders, whose office Ryan has given them as a cloak to hide behind. Each year Ryan has a dinner. You will find there political figures, police and other department officials—and mobsters. They have a chance to eat and talk together." (Quotes from *N.Y. Journal-American,* Oct. 29, 1951.)

And above and behind these characters someone else.

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I quote from Westbrook Pegler in the *N.Y. Journal-American,* Oct. 3, 1951: "The Mr. Big that many gossips have been hinting about lately is Bill McCormack, the boss of the port of New York. . . . He controls Joe Ryan." This is a man with whom anyone who wants to clean up the docks will have to deal sooner or later. William J. McCormack is head of the Penn Stevedoring Co., the McCormack Sand and Gravel Co., the Transit Mix Co., and is a director of the Pennsylvania Railroad. He is big business and, incidentally, a Knight of Malta.

Ordinarily I would not quote Pegler against any man. But I have checked this with those who know the waterfront inside out and they assure me that without any question Pegler is right on this point.

Viewed against this backdrop it is ridiculous to look upon the strike as a fight for more money or for a single shape-up or a day with an eight-hour guarantee, or even as a protest against the "telephone ballot" method of counting the contract ratification vote. This strike is nothing less than the cry of the slave for freedom. Like the cries of most slaves it is not exactly a masterpiece of reason and logic. At this writing Governor Dewey had just appointed a fact-finding committee—it looked like a good one too—but the strikers refused to commit themselves to abide by its decision. I sincerely hope that by the time this is in print they will have reversed themselves and let the Governor's committee fight their battle for them.

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RIGHT NOW it looks as though the fact-finding committee could do more for them than they could do for themselves simply by opening up the contract again. For the chances are that the fact-finding committee would see, as every disinterested observer has seen when he looks at the stinking rat-warren that is the New York waterfront, that the only solution for what ails the longshoremen is not one shape-up, but no shape-up.

As Spruille Braden put it, gangster control in the ILA is "spawned by the unfair and even brutal shape-up system of hiring." In the shape-up the men simply stand around at the head of the pier while a hiring boss picks out the individuals, or gangs, that he wants. Up till now the men have been shaping twice a day. By the time the shape is over, of course, it is too late to get work at another pier.

In such a set-up it is absolutely essential to be in with the hiring boss. And there are few hiring bosses who are not, in turn, bossed by somebody else. To be in with this somebody else it is usually necessary to pay some kind of a price. And the competition among bosses is also strenuous. As Braden says, continuing about the shape-up, "This results in all manner of criminal activity from kickbacks and loan-sharking through organized larceny and narcotics smuggling up to and including murder."

Several years ago I interviewed Gene Sampson and asked him what he thought of the rotary hiring hall as a solution to the evils of the shape-up. He said he had an open mind on the subject, but he felt that it wouldn't work in New York. If that is true, it would be strange indeed, because it has worked almost everywhere else but on the East Coast of America, where the ILA and Ryan's goons still hold sway.

The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the Xavier Labor School have been doing their best to introduce the rank-and-file longshoremen to the virtues of the hiring hall, which in this country has also become confused with the Commie regime of Harry Bridges on the West Coast. Unfortunately, at the present time too many of Ryan's opponents inside the ILA want to keep the shape-up for their own purposes. There is no question that it is a handy instrument for anyone who can win control of a pier. What these men have got to learn is that until they destroy the shape-up they will never be able to drive the mobs off the docks of New York. Any system of hiring that depends on one man is a sitting duck for another man with a gun. And the mobs have plenty of guns.

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PERHAPS IT WILL take another 25 or 50 years. But I think the mobs are on the way out. Not because anyone has yet arisen on the docks who can, by his own powers of leadership, break their grip. But because little by little more and more of the slime is being uncovered and exposed to the air and sunshine of publicity. As the decent elements in the community find out what is going on, more and more of them are becoming aroused and determined to do something about it. Eventually the community will have to help the men on the waterfront clean up. When that day comes all the rotten little politicians, all the big dirty fixers, and all the big and little hoods won't be able to stop the men of the ILA.

The only question is: are there enough decent elements in the community, and have they guts enough, to see that this job is done?

JOHN C. CORT

The Stage

TOP BANANA

INTEGRATED musicals are the fashion nowadays, but "Top Banana" is what you might call a happily unintegrated one. It is in the older manner of slapdash construction, star virtuosity, and the pace that kills any temptation you might have to wonder whether the show is one hundred proof. It is nice to discover that this is still a workable entertainment form. The integrated musical has been getting a little lugubrious lately—not everybody can handle it with the shrewdness of Rodgers

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and Hammerstein, and even Rodgers and Hammerstein are somewhat over-imposing in "The King and I"—and there are, in addition, a lot of delightful comedians who don't fit the more closely woven texture. An inventive comic needs lebensraum, a vehicle loose enough and baggy enough for an air of impromptu, and if we lose our ability for this kind of random manufacture around a star we are likely to lose the star, too.

It is also good news that a younger comedian has arrived at the point where he can hold such a fabrication together. I don't want to give the impression that Phil Silvers, the star of the piece, is recently out of knee-pants. But he is a good twenty years younger than most of the men who are able to hold down, or judiciously tear up, a musical comedy book, and it is reassuring to know that the free-wheeling stage clown is not going to vanish altogether.

Mr. Silvers is a lot better than he used to be. Time was when he worked too hard to be ingratiating, and when he seriously overworked a smallish supply of mannerisms. He is past that now. He relaxes on the stage in a comfortable confidence that the next bit of stage business will turn out to be funny after all; and when he gets to the bit of business he handles it with an easy energy. He is very funny in "Top Banana" and he justifies both the labor of constructing a show for him and the fact that it is patently constructed.

Hy Kraft has put his book together out of old burlesque routines—they are in good taste, by the way—and fragments of satire directed at the kind of television star who carries a carload of gagmen around with him to keep him in ad libs. The tieup between burlesque and television is a bit of a reach, and when Mr. Kraft is attending to more conventional matters—the love story, the dance cues—he is less than brilliant. Johnny Mercer's score is serviceable but undistinguished, and his lyrics require a lot of physical improvisation to keep them going. The dancing is mostly routine, and the women in the show are uninteresting.

But director Jack Donohue has raced by the saggier contributions with alacrity, and he sets up such a clatter when Silvers and stooges are on stage that you cooperate willingly in overlooking the occasional lapses. These are, after all, the normal hazards of this kind of show, and the good things add up to a very satisfactory entertainment. (*At the Winter Garden*) WALTER KERR

The Screen

QUO QUO OR WHITHER WHITHER

AUDIENCES who go to *"Quo Vadis"* will see pretty much what they expect: a super-colossal epic that cost about six and a half million dollars and has almost five thousand people milling in and out of the tremendous sets that were built in Italy. Because much of it is like a three-ring circus, they may not see all of the 32,000 costumes (made from 52,400 yards of material) or the 15,000 sandals or the 12,000 items of jewelry or the 4,000 helmets; and I'm sure they won't see even half of the 21,700 water bottles collected for the picture or even one third of the 200 goblets of Alexandria glass "fashioned expressly for the film in the famous glass-blowing plants of Venice." They may see most of the 63 lions and 450 horses because the lions are used rather effectively to eat Christians in the show that Nero puts on, and the horses appear handsomely in several parades and in the film's most exciting scene, when the hero races madly to Rome to save the heroine from the fire that is destroying the city as well as an awful lot of people. But so much for figures—"Quo Vadis" is obviously a big spectacle that shoots the works in Technicolor and gives you your money's worth in dancing girls, helmeted soldiers and goblets of Alexandria glass.

If the story, which as a child I first saw on the screen many years ago in a silent Italian movie that impressed me for its great contrasts between the wicked, depraved Romans and the noble, virtuous Christians, doesn't impress me quite so much any more, let part of the blame be mine and part be due to the makers of this movie. While I still honor and respect these early Christians for the suffering through which they went, I have learned since my first brush with "Quo Vadis" of other suffering Christians who also won honor and respect. If the makers of "Quo Vadis" really want to break my heart with the sufferings of these Christians being eaten by the lions, they should have made their film with a simple sincerity that would have impressed me for its realism. Producer Sam Zimbalist and Director Mervyn LeRoy did not have that in mind. They were out to make a splashy spectacle and that they did. "Quo Vadis" is a spectacle on a big scale, and in spite of a good cast its characters seldom come through as real people.

Robert Taylor gives a straightforward, manly performance as Marcus Vinicius, the famous Roman officer who leads his victorious men back to Rome, takes all the honors offered him in good stride, then upsets the Roman big-wigs by falling in love with a Christian slave. Actually Marcus is the central character in the film and the story is mainly concerned with his conversion to Christianity—through Lygia and several other worthy Christians whose fine standards and bravery in face of death finally inspire him to join their group. Lovely Deborah Kerr makes Lygia quite a lady who seems to have acquired so much Christian calm that even burning Rome or being tied to a stake in the arena where a bull rages doesn't upset her too greatly. Buddy Baer plays her gigantic bodyguard with muscular devotion. In the first part of the film Peter Ustinov's portrayal of Nero steals most of the scenes and he succeeds in making the depraved, self-styled genius quite understandable, but as the story progresses Ustinov starts to caricature his own performance.

By the time the plot gets to the famous circus scenes,

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Ustinov has turned into pure ham, and Nero instead of being a historic figure has become the conventional lyre-twanging symbol of corruption. Patricia Laffan is sulkily sexy as his evil wife. As Nero's cynical adviser, Leo Genn gives an excellent performance which could stand as a model in a historical melodrama of this kind. While Finlay Currie as St. Peter, Felix Aylmer as a Christian convert and Abraham Sofaer as St. Paul work hard with their lines, they are often handicapped in their big scenes by a theatrical atmosphere that detracts from conviction. Perhaps it is asking too much of an over-sized spectacle that it also have realism. Some of the inspiring qualities of Sienkiewicz' novel manage to come through, and for many audiences the bravery of these early Christians will provide further inspiration. I think these martyrs deserve more serious cinematic treatment—with or without 200 goblets of Alexandria glass.

★

BUT BETWEEN the script and the finished movie there is often many a slip. I'm sure when Graham Greene collaborated with Terence Ratigan on the screenplay of Greene's novel *Brighton Rock,* these two writers thought they were capturing the meaning and essence of that unusual novel. The finished result as we are now seeing it in this country, where it is known as *"Young Scarface,"* bears some resemblance to the original, but is on the whole little more than a terribly exciting gangster thriller. From its nervous, frightening opening scenes in which Pinkie and his gang pursue the man they plan to kill at Brighton right to the scene on the pier when Pinkie is trying to persuade Rose to join him in a suicide deal, the movie is one continuous horror. Producer Roy Boulting and Director John Boulting (makers of such fine movies as "Seven Days to Noon" and "Thunder Rock") know how to use cinema; that they prove in many individual scenes in "Young Scarface." But as a whole this picture just doesn't come off. It is confusing and its religious implications at the end require too much reading between lines—lines which aren't even there to guide the audience.

Richard Attenborough is excellent as Pinkie, the fallen-away Catholic who believes in hell, but is very dubious about heaven. Seldom have the movies portrayed such a ruthlessly cold killer. He is believable as a damned man, but what is not believable in the film is Rose's love for him. This is not so much due to Carol March's colorless portrayal of the role as to the script. As Ida, the blowsy, relentless woman who tracks Pinkie down, Hermione Baddley gives a warm, hearty performance that must have suited Greene's original scheme for this story which he labeled an "entertainment" but to which he gave a signifi,cant theme. The film does succeed in saying that we cannot understand the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God; but unfortunately we are so exhausted after watching Pinkie cut up so many people with his vengeful razor that we haven't quite the strength to figure out the meaning behind the meaning behind the violence.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE

UNITED STATES

AND

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Of Note

The Layman's Role

THE FIDES Publishers (21 West Superior St., Chicago 10, Illinois) recently published a book on Catholic Action by the late French Jesuit, Father Yves de Montcheuil, translated by Charles E. Parnell. It is called *For Men of Action* ($3.00). The following is an excerpt.

While the laity should ask the clergy for light on the doctrine of the Church, they should avoid submitting to a decision of the ecclesiastical hierarchy if that decision really belongs to the laity. If the faithful do not have the courage to assume their responsibilities and if they develop the habit of trying to cover themselves unnecessarily with a decision of authority, there is the danger of giving the clergy the unfortunate habit of intervening too much in the choice of temporal institutions. After that, one would be out of order in complaining of a clericalism which he has provoked and which is practically made necessary by his own pusillanimity. On the other hand, no one should begrudge the layman that territory which is reserved for him, or reproach him for performing himself the work which is entrusted to him. The laity should be instructed, formed, checked on, and judged, but not bridled or hindered.

We ought to consider the delicate situation of the priest: as a man who thinks, he cannot avoid having an opinion regarding the human institutions which are most in harmony with the Christian ideal, for it is desirable that he has an opinion; but he should not, as a priest, impose it on others, inasmuch as it is not part of his mission to teach on these matters. Agreed, it is difficult to keep one part of his person from encroaching on the other. In order to maintain himself in the proper position, he has the right to help the laity, who should not ask him to step out of his position; and if he does, the laity will render him a service by respectfully calling it to his attention.

Certainly a priest who has a particular competency may propose a solution of a temporal nature; but then he speaks as a man, not as a minister of the Church. In order to avoid in practice the clericalism which everyone condemns in theory, the faithful as well as the clergy must feel their own responsibilities and have the courage to face them.

If one does not accept unhesitatingly this division of competencies, which is the result not of a sort of temporary but revocable concordat but of the very nature of the Church and her mission, then it is vain to speak of lay action. And one would go counter to the justifiable sensitivity of those very persons who are best cut out to exercise a Christian action in the temporal order.

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Books

Memoirs of Ernst Weizsacker. Henry Regnery Co. $3.75.

THE dust jacket contains on its flap a list of related books published by the same firm, which the publishers seem to regard as a statement of the context in which these memoirs should be read. They include Speidel's heroization of Marshal Rommel; Freda Utley's venemous book, which presents American policy after 1945 as nothing but vengeance; Montgomery Belgion's indictment of the Nuremberg trials; and finally a book, one of many, by Hans Rothfels, which gives a favorable view of a "resistance movement in Germany" during the Hitler regime. From memory, one might add Max Picard's *Hitler in Ourselves,* and Ernst Juenger's mysterious and cautiously over-symbolical *Marble Cliffs.* It is within this pattern that we should view Weizsacker's memoirs, according to the publisher. It is obvious that publishing in some cases is not just the book business but involves serious efforts to put across a message. As there are magazines of opinion, there clearly are also publishing ventures of opinion.

I have read dozens of books written by men and women who were somehow involved in the Hitler phenomenon, some very partisan, some matter of fact, some reliable and some very unreliable. If Weizsacker had written with the ease and detachment of Hitler's interpreter, Paul Schmitt, this book might have provided a sort of weird pleasure. But the late author of these memoirs was not a graceful writer; his book is dull and shows a heavy hand. There is nothing new here. I have read it all before in other memoirs. Nor does it contain any corrections of previous statements.

Then why—apart from the publisher's conscientious effort to change the current idea of the last war—publish it and review it? There is something personal in these memoirs that needed to be said, although translation, I think, was unnecessary. You may remember that the author received a great deal of attention in Catholic weeklies while his trial was going on in Nuremberg. The dispatches all came from the same source, as I remember, and were all written in a tone of outraged sentiments. Here was a man who at the end of his tragic career was a diplomat at the Vatican. Somehow or other his Catholic press advocate must have felt that this was enough to clear him. And then there was the seething impatience with his accusers, especially one unfortunate lawyer who also happened to be a Jewish refugee. Since it is commonly accepted that exiles from the Third Reich — Jewish or otherwise — are narrow, spiteful, vindictive creatures, this was another reason to arouse the Catholic public by whom Weizsacker, the Protestant, might be seen only as a man close to the Vatican. But, what manner of man was he?

He was a South German aristocrat, a former navy officer and a patriot. He was a quiet civil servant who did an efficient job, even when, according to Weizsacker's own book, he worked for the vulgar and unspeakable Ribbentrop. He thought of himself as a gentleman, a cultured and well-bred one. What he says about his youth, the First World War and the Weimar Republic has been said so often that it is boring; it is original only in that one wonders how anybody can still say these things after all that has happened in the meantime.

I said he was a patriot. I should have said a nationalist. He never was a Nazi, he says, and I suppose that at heart he wasn't, in spite of his rank in the Himmler S.S., his initials and signature on documents that a gentleman usually would not touch with a ten-foot pole. All the work he did with the Nazis, the dust jacket front-flap says, his "alleged complicity in some of the crimes of the Nazi regime" (I may add that I saw his initials and his signature on some very strange documents), he did in order to prevent war from breaking out and to stop the worst from happening. He admits he failed.

But let us take one case, like the Sudeten crisis. It is obvious that he wanted peace and disapproved of Hitler's disgustingly vulgar methods. But it is also obvious that he had no objection to the dismemberment of Czechoslovokia. He would have done it in a more gentlemanly fashion.

There is no doubt he did his best to protect people from Hitler's maniacs where he could; he helped some Jews and some Aryans, some political and some religious victims of Nazism. I suspect he did it at a certain personal risk. He disapproved of invasions, especially of Norway where he had been happy and respected as a consul; he strongly disapproved of unnecessary and wanton cruelty. He kept in touch with members of the group which later on tried to assassinate Hitler. At that time he was out of Hitler's reach in the Vatican. There is no doubt that he was not a Nazi of the species "Nazi vulgaris." If one wanted to bracket him, he belonged with those ardent nationalists whose exponents spoke in the TAT magazine and frequented the Gentlemen's Club in Berlin, although he may never have literally been one of them.

WHAT I cannot understand is how a man of his experience and calibre expected to save peace and not get involved with the worst aspects of Nazism, since he obviously knew with whom he was dealing. To explain this simply as idealism or naiveté, would be to discredit his intelligence. As a matter of fact, I think that his worst failing lies just there: in his comprehension — the lack of it, I mean.

He shared Hitler's contempt for the League of Nations and for the Western Allies and the Fuehrer's stealthy admiration for Stalin. Some of his theses sound peculiar to an American reader. He was convinced, for instance, that Roosevelt not only wanted to get into the war against Hitler from personal motives, but that he maneuvered the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor. The whole

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book reads as if addressed to the nascent party of *revanche* at home and the extreme wing of the Republicans in the United States. That a man who saw daily with his own eyes the impossibility of overthrowing Hitler by the half-hearted methods his friends advocated should blame England for having thwarted their plans in 1938 by going to Munich, and say Roosevelt was responsible for their later failure because of his demand for unconditional surrender, is a rather surprising line. It is one of those instances where one doubts, not a man's honesty but his intelligence. All through Weizsacker's book you see the correct civil servant, horrified by his masters, but silently hoping to tame the beast. Rather Micawberish in a sort of gruesome way.

With Hitler gone, the latent indignation finally burst through his veneer of restraint and good manners; in his last chapter he finds an ersatz for his long frustrated horror: the Americans.

He was not too squeamish to cooperate with the Nazis, because they were Germans, but he was indignant when an American asked him to cooperate. In this book he shows his scorn at the crudeness of American jurists who published the incriminating documents that bore his signature without permitting him to write a running commentary on how, in each individual case, it got there. "I did not take all this at all seriously," he says, when he becomes aware of the possibility that he too might be tried. When he is arrested by a German policeman—perhaps a fellow who cooperated with the Americans "to prevent the worst"? —he asked him "Are you a German?" to which the policeman "shamefacedly answered: 'Yes.'"

In cold fury he describes his being stripped in prison—probably for the famous poison vial of Goering fame —and put into an ordinary barred prison cell. "If I were to try to describe my experiences with the American prosecuting authorities I should be suspected of being subjective," he writes, with an almost British flair for understatement. "But one tribute I can pay them: the physical risk was less with them than with Hitler." It seems that this quiet, smooth patriot is not as mousy as he appeared to be under his former masters, after all.

If it weren't such a tragic document, the finale could be called "corny." But the man is dead and no one will deny that in his limited way he tried, although sometimes not too convincingly and in a strange way, to fight Hitler. His devious method of doing so, by accepting a high office with no real power to do much, is explained by his lack of comprehension, which did not come to him even when he had plenty of leisure—on his farm and in prison.

THIS phenomenon is as yet unexplained. A famous German architect is quoted as having said about an exiled priest who greatly helped to spread his fame: "He is one of those little exiles who got all

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excited about Hitler, while we knew he was only an episode." Here is a category of intellectuals who, by hindsight, see everything *sub specie aeternitatis*: the millions of starved, gassed and bombed, the crushed freedoms and devastated lands, the woes now upon us as a consequence of a few madmen's doings—*sub specie aeternitatis* they are nothing but an episode!

Sure, Migration of Nations is only three words, in German but one. Thirty years of war can be dealt with in fifteen minutes in class. *Sub specie aeternitatis,* what the Germans grandiosely call *saekulares Denken* (thinking in centuries), tells me that Stalin is but an "episode." With that attitude, why get hot and bothered over iron and bamboo curtains? They won't last (although they may last longer than the life of democratic freedom). Any civil servant not forced to do so who would serve under Molotov or Malik—who are better statesmen than Ribbentrop, which even I can see—in order to "prevent the worst," should have his head examined. But that is exactly what the late German Secretary of State under Hitler did.

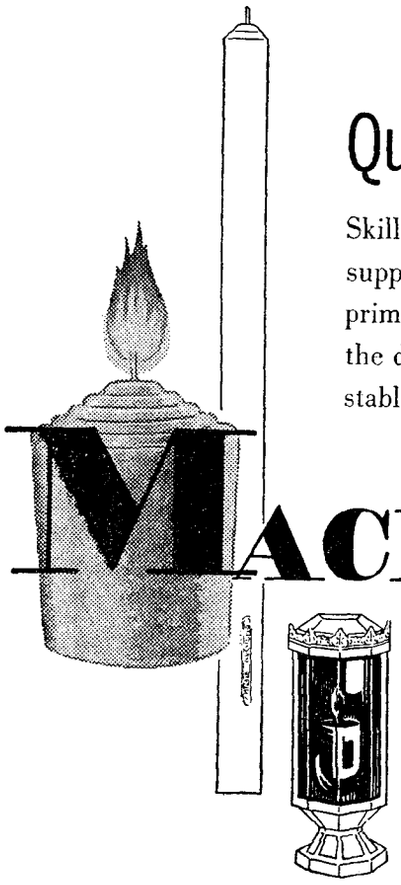
His just complaint that the democratic nations by their constant yielding to Hitler's growing demands handed the Fuehrer his successes and allowed him an ever tighter grip on the nation, is partly, not altogether, I am sure, explained through his own action: the confusion "respectable aristocrats" created in the free world by their very service to "the beast." If decent and reputable Germans did not disentangle themselves from this alleged "episode"—men who knew what he was up to—how could the statesmen of the free world assess the full import of what happened behind the propaganda curtain of Goebbels? Just because of the Keitels, the Weizsackers, the Neuraths, the Berings, the Eltzes and Herr von Papen, the desperate warnings of exiles were written off as so much "Jewish hysteria." On second thought, against the author's own intention, this book may yet help us to understand a lot!

H. A. REINHOLD.

The Conformist. ***Alberto Moravia.*** *Farrar, Straus and Young.* $3.50.

A BARE list of the more prominent people and events in *The Conformist* gives the novel the look of a twentieth-century tragedy of blood: the protagonist, Marcello Clerici, is the child of a promiscuous mother and a literally insanely jealous father. The mother winds up as a dope addict pursuing the pleasures of the flesh with her chauffeur; when last we see the father he is utterly mad, confined, hallucinating wildly as an adviser to the Duce and writing endless speeches on the theme, Murder and Melancholy. Marcello himself, as a boy, shapes his life by slaughtering lizards and even more by a tentative affair with a homosexual ex-priest, whom he finally kills. After these early intimations of abnormality, Marcello dedicates himself to the normal, a dedication Moravia has handled in his earlier work.

Marcello seeks the normal in his work as an official of the Fascist se-



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cret police and in his marriage with a dull-witted bourgeois girl, Giulia. He combines a satisfyingly traditional Paris honeymoon with the mission of putting the finger on an intellectual exile, Quadri, his former teacher. In Paris he almost rises to a new normality through a new love for Quadri's wife, Lina, but Lina turns out to be interested solely in Giulia. Quadri and Lina are both killed and Marcello returns to Rome still not free of the guilt he assumed as a boy. The last illusory wisp of his real normality fades with the regime which he served. Finally when he is beyond illusion and disillusion, he is machine-gunned from the air and dies with Giulia and their child.

The first three chapters, dealing with Marcello the boy, are absolutely gripping and superbly done. Nothing in the rest of the novel quite comes up to that height. Tragedy of blood is not the only Elizabethan note: the novel could well fit such a title as "psychological-sociological-cosmological-symbolical-historical melodrama." All these aspects, each of them much too consciously attended to, are more than the story can bear. For the sake of this complex symbolism the story, time and again, comes awfully close to the ridiculous. The revelation of Lina as a Lesbian is an example: in one sense, this is absolutely "right"; Marcello's quest for the normal demands such an answer from fate. But in terms of story, the development looks very much like the arrival of the horse marines in the last act.

It is this reader's personal opinion that what Moravia has here attempted—the heaping up of "levels of meaning" and the elaboration of several simultaneous and interdependent symbolic systems—can be done in this scope only as "heartless" intellectual comedy of a very high order: Waugh, Huxley, *The Twenty-fifth Hour*. In the sympathetic mode employed by Moravia it requires a vastly wider compass: Thomas Mann, and, in our own country and much less successfully, Thomas Wolfe.

For anyone deeply interested in the contemporary novel, *The Conformist* has a lot more to offer than the brilliant opening chapters. Moravia now shows a mastery of the visual scene completely absent from, say, *The Woman of Rome*. In fact in all the differences between this new work and the first, some good, some bad, can be seen the growth of an important, potentially a great, writer of our times. FRANK GETLEIN.

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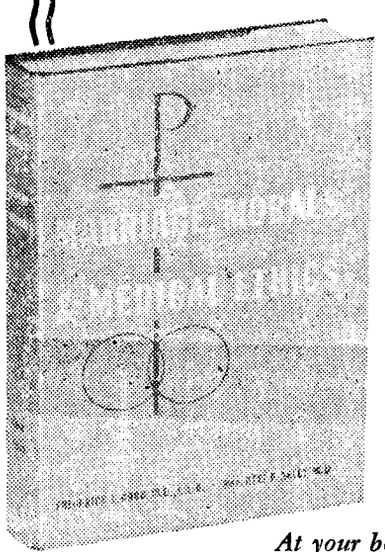

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We Never Called Him Henry. Harry Bennett, as told to Paul Marcus. Gold Medal. $0.25.

"INCREDIBLE" is the word used by the publishers to describe old Henry Ford's idiosyncracies and contraditions—his hatred of "capitalists," his religious prejudices, his alternate bursts of sentimentality and cruelty. Looked at psychologically, however, they are quite easily explained. What is closer to incredible is the fact that a multi-million dollar industrial empire, ruled by an erratic mechanic, heavily influenced by a man of dubious character and intelligence who had constant traffic with the underworld, and kept in a state of managerial anarchy by intrigue, could exist as long as it did.

Harry Bennett, Ford's right hand (and hidden hand) man for almost thirty years, partially pulls back the curtain on the fantastic picture of company operations while the old man ruled the roost. Many of his "revelations" have been common gos-

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sip around Detroit for many years, many are surprising and shocking. Without this "hot" material, it would be one of the dullest books of the year, but scandal needs no style, and these reprinted magazine articles are selling at a great rate.

The book's chief value will be as a source for future serious studies of the Ford phenomenon. Perhaps they will correct the impression you get from Bennett that he was just a nice, misunderstood guy trying to do the right thing; that he has nothing like thuggery or intimidation to be ashamed of; that almost every good idea or innovation at the Ford Motor Company was inspired by him; that Edsel, Henry II, and many other prominent executives are bumbling clowns compared to him. Some of the men Bennett hates are running the company now—after booting him out—and doing a pretty good job of it. That always irks an old timer, and maybe Harry got tired of simply reminiscing about the good old strong arm days at the Rouge and decided to air a few of his grudges—for a price. In doing it, he unconsciously strengthens the indictment against himself and his old boss.

PAUL V. FARRELL.

Time and the Wind. Erico Verissimo. Macmillan. $4.50.

FOR MORE than 600 pages Mr. Verissimo carries his readers down the Brazilian generations of South America's Wild West, the rich and open state of Rio Grande do Sul. A continuing zest and imaginative recreativeness prevent the reader from falling into fatigue, even when he is rather vague about which generation and which epic family is currently most violently expiring, or more violently surviving.

As the title itself tells, *Time and the Wind* is a very historical novel of very self-conscious intent. Both as a novel and as history, it is more than a little messy, decorated by romantic, impressionistic bias—historical, philosophic and literary. The writing style and vocabulary go beyond the bounds of felicitous translation from the Portuguese. A North American feels the soft hand of a watered down Walt Whitman kneading the overseas artistic dough. And the pioneering experience of southern Brazil is exotic and sharply contrasted to the North American: much harder, more violent, and longer drawn out.

The book is avowed epic, covering centuries, but the principal narrative passage dwells upon a too eccentric experience for universalization, with a most unpleasantly pathological misfit wife. The heroine of the generations is a tough and wicked old lady named Doña Bibiana, whom the author expects us to honor, it seems, as a strong and splendid symbol of the will to live.

The unity of the book, however, is largely geographic and ethnological. Its various passages and scenes retain large independence. Most of these parts have their own life and interest, and this makes a large part of the reading, taken by itself without long thoughts, good reading.

PHILIP BURNHAM.

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purpose is to discover the "bond of union existing among the mysteries." The key to this union is Christ—the whole Christ: "The supernatural unity of all creation, and more particularly, since men are in question, the unity of mankind in the God-man."

"The whole Christ . . . is God: He is the Word, the Son of the Father, the Spirator of the Spirit; He is the Redeemer, the head of the body which is the Church, the living fount that floods Christians with grace, the power that is operative in the sacraments. Moreover, He is one. The whole Christian religion is drawn together in His unity, and all dogmas but express the totality of what He is." The basic principle of all Christianity "is the union of God with man in the whole Christ, and hence a union of God's action with man's action."

The work was published in French in 1944, and since it antedates the encyclical *Mystici Corporis,* it has to be read in light of what the encyclical teaches. It is indeed a major achievement. The Scholastic theologians "were not at home with the doctrine of the mystical body" and, since in studying the supernatural in Christ's humanity "Aristotle's categories are too narrow for this mystery," the author deserves vast credit for his theological formations. Perhaps he is too speculative, too philosophical for most readers. In theological works that seek to give a philosophical mold to revelation the fire of revealed truth is often missed. This work is built on Scripture, and yet Scripture is too often given merely by reference. The reasoning is generally *about* revelation rather than directly *on* revelation. The author is at his best when showing Christ at work in the Church today. "When a man becomes a Christian he lives, thinks, prays, and suffers not in solitude, nor with Christ alone—for Christ is not alone—but with all mankind." "Sacraments are actions of Christ performed today."

The whole Christ—head and members—confronts the reader continuously. "Since the time of the Incarnation, God is not other than Christ; and since Pentecost, Christ is not other than the Church. On the one side, hypostatic unity; on the other side, mystic unity; but in both cases the unity is real. The Church is the word of God addressed to all nations; the Church is the eternal Truth that has drawn close to us in order to become ours." "In reality, there are not, on the one side, those who teach, and on the other, quite separate, those who are taught; there is but one life, one mystical body, one complete Christ, head and members. When the head communicates light to the members, a single mystical man grows in knowledge: *et est unus Christus docens seipsum.*"

In view of the central position of the cross in Christianity, that is, of worship through sacrifice, and in view of the principle of worship, so emphasized in "Seek you first the kingdom of God and his justice," and so neatly given revealed prominence in the first half of the Our Father, this reviewer cannot agree with the "greater importance of Holy Communion" over the Mass.

WILLIAM H. RUSSELL.

My Heart Laid Bare. Charles Baudelaire. Vanguard. $3.50.

THE NAME Baudelaire makes us think, even if not consciously, of such words as "bawdy" and "delirium" and of the phrase *"beau de l'air."* Curiously, these very subjects —bawds, the delirium of marijuana, and the "dandy" are the subjects of this collection of short prose pieces by the archsymbolist poet of that name.

Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud—we know how, with us, history of criticism and criticism itself are commonly written and studied as if these men had never written or as if France had disappeared a hundred years ago. Our professors of criticism pay as little attention in that direction as they pay to Poe! We might, therefore, as a possible means of remedying the defect, welcome in translation essays by such men.

Needless to say, however, treatment of such subjects as those in *My Heart Laid Bare,* though communicating very well Baudelaire's splenetic yet thirsty attitude towards life, can afford no very comprehensive and well-articulated criticism of art and letters.

While acknowledging that the French have (through Baudelaire's translation) the prose pieces of Poe, Mr. H. L. Mencken observes that the French did not derive a Poe theory of art and letters from Poe's critical pieces, but deduced it, instead, from his performances in poetry and fiction. An examination of *My Heart Laid Bare* would persuade one that we, if we are to integrate into our comprehension of criticism the principles that have informed French letters over the past hundred years, are left to do something similar; we must, that is, deduce those principles from the actual practice of French writers.

Of course, that deduction—from Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé—will force our critics to look back to the neglected Poe and (as Professor McLuhan insists) forward to Joyce.

Save for prompting such reflections as those, *My Heart Laid Bare* offers curiously little.

WILLIAM J. KERRIGAN.

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